

Correspondence in Opposition to the Great Lakes State Park from Brendon Baillod

Email of transmission:

From: **brendon@baillod.com** (baillod@gmail.com)

Sent: Sat 5/26/07 8:12 PM

Reply-to: brendon@baillod.com

To: Zabone@aol.com (zabone@aol.com); straitsdiver@hotmail.com; DAVID TROTTER (DITrotter@msn.com)

FYI:

From: brendon@baillod.com <baillod@gmail.com>

Date: May 26, 2007 7:10 PM

Subject: Divers opposed to Shoreline State Park

To: jbrewer@senate.michigan.gov

Text of letter of opposition:

As a senior member of the Great Lakes diving community, I want to voice my objection to the proposed legislation that will create a state park to include most Michigan Great Lakes shoreline, and most specifically the provision to have a voluntary fee for wreckdivers. As an avid diver, I have published a great deal on wreckdiving and have been featured on the History Channel, Discovery Channel, etc. I operate an online discussion forum for Great Lakes divers that's been in existence since 1997 and gets thousands of visitors each week. Over the past decade, I've seen many issues generate discussion, but none has generated the almost unanimously negative discussion of the proposed legislation. Divers all over the Great Lakes, from both sides of the political aisle, are opposed strongly to this legislation for a number of reasons.

Michigan has been sold a bill of goods by an experienced and highly motivated political empire builder in the form of Ken Vrana. Ken is vastly overstating the number of divers that are currently visiting Michigan wrecks and the amount of tourism dollars they spend. Great Lakes wreckdiving tourism is currently at an all-time low and is continuing to decline. The dive industry in the US is tracked closely by a number of trade groups and their figures confirm that dive shops in our region have failed at an unprecedented level. Even the most heavily visited of Michigan's underwater preserves now see only a fraction of the dive visitation they did in the late 1980s and early 90s. As such, any fee levied will generate an paltry amount of revenue and will not even pay for its collection apparatus. Worst, it will be perceived as a further impediment to diving at a time when the Great Lakes dive community can ill afford it. The Great Lakes dive tourism industry

is already faltering. A fee in Michigan may spell its end as we know it.

If Michigan is under the impression that there is a significant Great Lakes dive tourism industry that will generate substantial fee revenue, it is gravely mistaken. Please make sure that you're not listening only to those with a vested interest. It is incumbent upon you as responsible elected officials to gather the best information available and to make decision in the public interest on that basis. If you consult dive industry trade groups and if you consult local chambers of commerce at Michigan Underwater Preserve locations, you will find that my statements are accurate.

I'm not opposed personally to the concept of the park. It is the provision to levy a fee on divers, the motivation behind it, its effect and impracticality that I am opposed to.

Kind regards,

Brendon Baillod
brendon@ship-wreck.com
Great Lakes Shipwreck Research
www.ship-wreck.com

Biographical Information for Brendon Baillod

Brendon is an avid marine historian, researcher and collector of Great Lakes books and ephemera. A certified avocational underwater archeologist, he holds memberships in the Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association, the Association for Great Lakes Maritime History, the Wisconsin Marine Historical Society and the Great Lakes Historical Society. He is the creator of "Wisconsin's Lake Michigan Shipwrecks: Algoma to Kenosha," a directory of over 700 historical wrecks derived from newspaper and vessel enrollment microfilms and is soon to release "Pentwater Shipwrecks," a directory of historic losses in the Oceana County, Michigan area. Brendon's other works include a complete inventory of historic shipwrecks in and around Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula. He is the creator of the Great Lakes Shipwreck Research website and has published numerous articles in Inland Seas and Soundings. He is a Director and co-founder of the Great Lakes Shipwreck Research Foundation, which hosts the annual Ghost Ships Festival in Milwaukee. Brendon holds degrees in Psychology and Management Information Systems. He is employed as a Software Engineer specializing in Enterprise Java Systems Development.